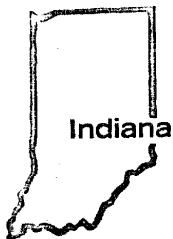


from the office of

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FOR RELEASE:

Noon, Friday, February 2, 1968
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EXCERPTS FROM
REMARKS BY SENATOR BIRCH BAYH OF INDIANA TO THE INDIANA REMC
Sheraton-Lincoln Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana
February 2, 1968

THE AMERICAN STAKE IN VIETNAM

In 1965 the United States was confronted with the cruel facts of life--the Viet Cong were on the verge of overrunning all of South Vietnam. Saigon was surrounded, large scale battles were taking place in the heavily populated coastal plains, and most of the Delta was under Communist subjugation. Because of the infusion of American military might and the very capable manner in which our fighting men have risen to the challenge, this threat of a Communist victory has largely been prevented. Along with the South Vietnamese we must now begin shifting to the long-range goals of securing the countryside, building a strong political foundation, and developing economic stability.

These permanent, long-range goals can only be accomplished by the South Vietnamese. We stand ready to help them, but a permanent solution rests on their ability to rise to this difficult challenge.

As I see it, our future course of action should be predicated on the ability of the South Vietnamese government to prove it can govern.

First the South Vietnamese government must clean itself of the corruption which presently permeates almost every echelon of governmental activity. This corruption which I first pointed out more than two years ago has become almost a way of life. It is important for us to make the record abundantly clear to the Thieu-Ky regime that the continued existence of corruption will not be permitted. The Saigon profiteers will not be permitted to make gains at the expense of American lives and the sacrifices of American men and women.

and goal will not be achieved in a few days or weeks. Some progress

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prove it can provide the services which any government must provide for its people. The present government has been in power about four months. Very frankly, I saw little evidence of the kind of action which is needed in the hamlets and villages of Vietnam. The farmers, the villagers, those who live in the scattered hamlets of South Vietnam, are sorely in need of schools, roads, health facilities, better agricultural expertise; here again some progress has been made. The introduction of new rice varieties is everywhere discussed, but the lack of credit and technical assistance has hampered progress, and to date there has been no noticeable increase in rice production.

Much of the future progress in achieving these long-range goals will depend upon the willingness of our American forces, both military and civilian, to permit the South Vietnamese to assume increasing responsibility. It is imperative that the United States forces start shifting this burden to the Vietnamese. Here again we are there to help--but they have to assume the final responsibility.

Third, we must increase our efforts to train and equip adequately the ARVN military forces. Often their lack of success on the battlefield can be traced directly to inferior weaponry and fire power and to a lack of forceful leadership. We must help them provide this leadership which is indispensable for military success.

As the ARVN units become better trained and equipped, we must give them more specific responsibilities in certain areas and withdraw our forces so that the South Vietnamese become the source of security throughout the countryside. Elements of the South Vietnamese First Division have been better equipped and are in place along a small segment of the DMZ--and they are performing well. But, we must, in my judgment, increase this shifting of the burden of responsibility.

Fourth, just as in the military field where the burden of responsibility must be shifted, so must this be the case with the civilian effort. In the vast building programs which are needed to restore South Vietnam, this responsibility must be shifted to the Vietnamese people themselves. If they have participated in the construction of bridges, of schools, of dispensaries, they will not only appreciate their services to a greater degree, but they will make the necessary sacrifices in order to maintain and protect them.

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I could enumerate other steps which, in my judgment, are necessary.

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However, I will wait until a later date. In the final analysis, I feel the stakes involved in South Vietnam are great. The ramifications of a defeat there would be greater than most of us could imagine. Nevertheless, I do not believe the cost, the sacrifices which American should be asked to bear, is unlimited. The extent of effort which the United States is called upon to expend should be directly equated to the ability of the South Vietnamese to assume a larger responsibility and a larger share of their own burden.

If, after reasonable period of time the South Vietnamese or their government prove that they are unable or unwilling to make the effort that is necessary to provide for their own common defense and their own governmental stability, then I think the United States will be forced to undergo an agonizing reappraisal of our policy in South Vietnam. For our presence in Vietnam is predicated on our willingness to help the South Vietnamese to help themselves.

I hope and pray that we will be successful in the joint effort which is presently being waged by some thirty nations. I hope and pray that we can be successful in our efforts to secure a just and honorable peace, stop the fighting, and get the boys home.